

West Africa

Ghana, Togo, Benin, Senegal, and The Gambia

Departs 6th November 2023

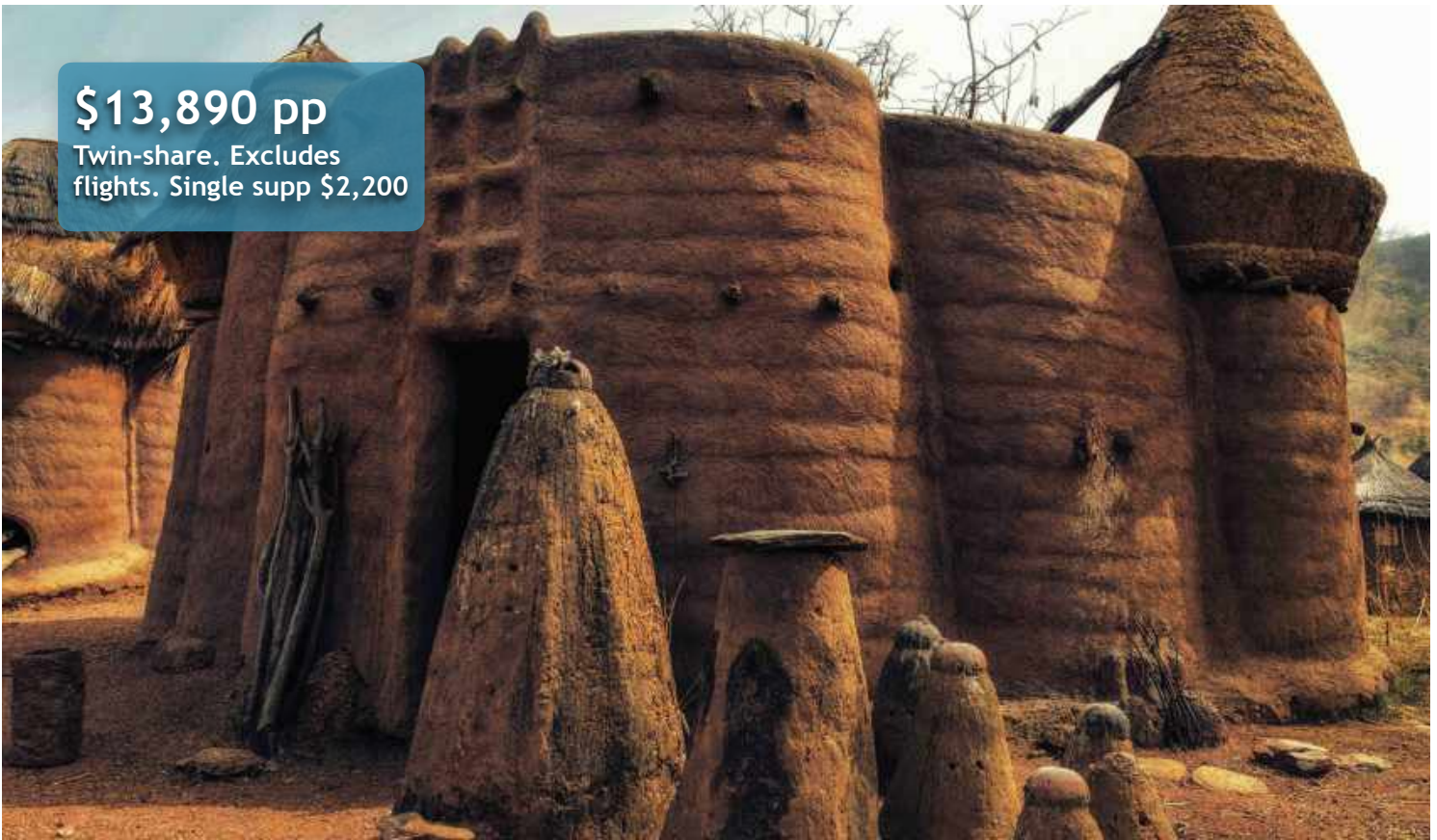
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GHANA, TOGO, BENIN, SENEGAL, AND THE GAMBIA

The Republic of Ghana is a stand-out economic success and most politically stable country in the region. It was the first Sub Saharan country to gain independence from a European power when it separated from Britain in 1957, and UNESCO listed buildings from this period still remain.

About the same size as Victoria, the population of Ghana is around 23 million. There are more than 100 different languages spoken, however, luckily for us, English is the official language and most widely used. The capital city, Accra, sits on the South Atlantic Ocean and is a mix of modern, glass and steel facades, with sleepy villages on the outskirts.

Togo is a tiny country smaller than Tasmania, with a population of around 6 million. The capital Lome, sitting on the coast, has almost 20% of those. Togoland was originally part of Ghana however the Germans colonised it in the late 1800s. In the 1920s "the League of Nations partitioned this region between France and U.K/Britain with France taking over what is now called Togo. Despite its colonial history, ancient traditions still remain, making it a fascinating melting pot of cultures.

Bordering Togo to the East is Benin, also located on the Guinea Gulf. It used to be known as the Kingdome of Dahomey up until the late 1800s. The French colonised Benin in the early 1900s however it became independent in 1960. Benin is the ideal travel destination, with its world heritage-listed mini fortified castles, the abundant wildlife of Pendjari National Park and its interesting history of Voodoo.

Senegal is a land of contrast and one of the West's culturally diverse countries. Its combination of African and French cultures provides a mix of sophistication and rawness. Its slave past is evident with many monuments dotting the nation. The locals love their music and this is evident with bars on nearly every corner of the capital Dakar. If you're a birdwatcher, it happens to be one of Africa's best places to visit as it sits on the migration path between Africa and Europe.

The Gambia – the smallest country on mainland Africa – has much to see despite its size. Traditional music is heard morning, day and night. Birdwatching is its biggest tourist attraction and no trip is complete without a cruise up the Gambia River – from which the country's name is derived.

This fascinating itinerary offers five diverse countries, which combined, represent the best West Africa has to offer. So grab your camera and your sense of adventure!



Day 1, Monday 6th November
AUSTRALIA

Depart Sydney or Melbourne for your flight to Accra, the capital city of Ghana (all flights to be confirmed).

Day 2, Tuesday 7th November
ARRIVE ACCRA

Welcome to Ghana

On arrival at Kotoka International Airport, we'll meet our guide and transfer to the hotel. Once checked in, our guide will brief the group on what to expect during our stay in Ghana. Celebrate the start of the journey with a welcome dinner. Accommodation for two nights is at the Labadi Beach Hotel (or similar). *D*

Day 3, Wednesday 8th November
ACCRA

Our first full day in Accra will be spent immersed in the history and day to day life of the local people of Accra. The local Ga Tribes were the original custodians of the current modernised city of Accra and our first visit takes us to Jamestown, one of Accra's most historic neighbourhoods. Visit the lighthouse where we will have a panoramic view of Jamestown fishing community. We will walk through

the Fish Market, experiencing the hustle and bustle at the seashore as fishermen dock their boats and fish mongers sell the catch. We will have the opportunity to pay a courtesy visit to the Palace of the Ga Chief of the community. We'll continue to Makola Market, the biggest open market in Accra and a fascinating reflection of Ghanaian culture. Take in the frenetic mix of sights and smells at this important trading hub. Our day tour ends at the La Township where we learn about the uniquely designed special caskets at the Teshie Nungua area which reflect the beliefs of the people in life after death. Overnight at Labadi Beach Hotel. *B/D*



Day 4, Thursday 9th November
ACCRA — CAPE COAST — ELMINA

Today, we depart for the Coastal lands of Ghana- Elmina and Cape Coast approx. 150km). Enroute, explore the old quarter (Mankessim) with its unique Posuban shrines, made by the traditional 'Asafo' societies which were once responsible for local defence. Upon arrival in Elmina, we will visit Elmina

Castle (also known as St. George's Castle), built by the Portuguese in 1482. The castle was the first European structure built in Sub-Saharan Africa is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In the afternoon enjoy the sights of the many colourful fishing boats bringing their daily catch into the harbour and take the opportunity to mix with the locals. A short distance from the market we'll visit the boat builders, still building colourful fishing boats using traditional tools and methods spanning centuries. Accommodation for two nights is at the Ridge Royal Hotel, Elmina (or similar). *B/D*



 **Day 5,
Friday 10th
November
ELMINA — CAPE
COAST —
KUMASI**

Today we will visit Cape Coast Castle, a UNESCO

world heritage site (approx. 248km). The castle is a thought-provoking monument to a harrowing period in the region's history. You will take an emotional journey through the castle which held more enslaved Africans than any other in the region. There is a significant history museum inside, which explains the heritage of the castle and Cape Coast itself. Next we'll visit 'Global Mamas' – an inspiring non-profit fair-trade organisation, assisting women in Ghana to become economically independent. Later we will drive through the forest zone to Kumasai where the Ashanti people reside. Then visit 'Global Mama's' – an inspiring non-profit and Fair-trade organization, assisting women in Ghana to become economically independent. During this visit you can learn about the challenges and successes of running these kinds of projects. Get crafty and turn your hand to learning about the traditional West African art of Batik making. We return to the hotel for the night and prepare for dinner. *B/D*

 **Day 6, Saturday 11th November
ELMINA — ASSIN MANSO — KUMASI**

After breakfast, drive through the forest zone to Kumasi, the seat of the Ashanti Empire to explore the legends of the famous Ashantis, whose legacies are still evident today with a stop at Assin Manso. We'll visit the site of "Donkor Nsuo", the former Slave River and market and the final transit point for a large number of enslaved Africans. Kumasi may surprise you, being the most dynamic marketplace in West Africa, and second largest city in Ghana with a population of almost three million. It is a vibrant commercial centre, visited by traders from all over. Kumasi has quite a collection of British colonial buildings and it is the heart of the Ashanti culture. We will enjoy a drive through the city with monuments dedicated to the memory of the great Ashanti people. End the day at the National Cultural Centre, which features the Prempeh II Jubilee Museum and the

studios of brass makers, potters and batik artists. Accommodation for two nights at the Golden Tulip Hotel (or similar). *B/D*

 **Day 7, Sunday 12th November
KUMASAI AND SURROUNDS**

We'll spend the day in and around Kumasi, taking in the Manhyia Palace Museum to obtain firsthand knowledge of the legacies of the Ashanti kingdom. A regal history that dates back to 1700 is told with relics and artifacts. We will end our day of exploration by visiting some of the craft villages of the surrounding lush countryside. We'll see the weaving of the famous Kente cloth, the making of the Adinkra, a type of fabric worn at funerals, and prized for its intricate hand printed symbols, and the work of woodcarvers – stools, fertility figures, drums, etc. We will also have the opportunity to visit the ancient Ejisu Ashanti Shrine, a World Heritage Site. *B/D*

 **Day 8, Monday 13th November
KUMASI — TORGOME — AKOSOMBO**

We'll depart early this morning for a scenic drive to a beautiful village located on splendid Volta River. We will pay a courtesy call on the paramount chief and elders amidst traditional drumming and dancing by the villagers and participate in a naming ceremony to be honoured with a traditional African name. We will view a demonstration of pottery making which is the main occupation of the women in the village and experience the traditional Kente weaving process. We'll continue to Akosombo (approx 250 km) for accommodation at the Royal Senchi Hotel (or similar) where we stay for two nights. *B/D*

 **Day 9, Tuesday 14th November
AKOSOMBO — KROBO ODUMASE —
AKOSOMBO**

After breakfast, a picturesque drive to the cradle of hydroelectricity in Ghana, the famous Akosombo Hydro-electric Dam which is located within the Akosombo gorge, on the Volta River.

The construction of the dam resulted in the flooding of the Volta River basin which resulted in the creation of Lake Volta, the largest



man-made lake in Africa which covers over 3.6% of Ghana's total land area. We will continue on a visit to a small village called Krobo Odumase to witness firsthand experience of beads making from specially crafted glasses- Cedi Beads Factory. We will have the opportunity to design our own beads using the traditional Krobo technique. The bead-making craft has a long history in Ghana. Beads have been used in ceremonies of birth, coming of age, marriage, or death for the past 400 years. You will watch and participate in the whole bead-making process from

beginning to end. Dinner and overnight at the hotel.
B/D



Day 10, Wednesday 15th November
AKOSOMBO — SHAI HILLS — LOME

After a refreshing night along the splendid Volta River, and a sumptuous breakfast, we'll depart for Lome. Enroute, we visit the Shai Hills Reserve, an Eco-tourist location for game viewing by driving through the reserve. At Shai Hills, we shall see various animals including antelopes, bushbucks, baboons, other animals and several birds. You will have the



opportunity to learn about the various artefacts found in the reserve, which is the homeland of the Krobo ethnic group. You may also visit the caves, which is of historic importance to the Krobos and other

tribes. There are three caves in all and depending on your energy, you may visit all. We follow the coast dotted with Ewe villages, tranquil lagoons and tropical vegetation before we reach Togo and the capital Lome (we depart Ghana/enter Togo via the Aflao border post).

Welcome to Togo

Lomé, with a population of 837,437 (metro population 1,570,283), is the capital and largest city of Togo. Located on the Gulf of Guinea, Lomé is the country's administrative and industrial center and its chief port. The city exports coffee, cocoa, copra, and palm kernels. It also has an oil refinery. The city was founded in the 19th century by German, British and African traders, becoming the capital of Togoland in 1897. Upon arrival we will have a scenic drive of Lome: an ocean drive, market area, public buildings, main boulevards and the new International Museum of the Gulf of Guinea. Transfer to Hotel Sancta Maria to check in. Dinner at the hotel. *B/D*



Day 11, Thursday
16th November
LOME —
ATAKPAME —
KARA

Today we head towards Northern Togo to Sokode stopping in the

typical African town of Atakpame built in amongst picturesque hills. The town is synonymous with weaving and you will see brightly colored fabric everywhere called Kente. From Atakpame we move to the tropical forests surrounding Kpalime, a town with a rich colonial past and now an important trading centre. Enjoy a walk in the forest to discover its

mysterious nocturnal world and enjoy the sounds of nature. Under the guidance of a local entomologist we will learn about endemic butterflies and insects. We continue to Kara and check in to Hotel Kara for one night (total driving distance 416 km). This evening, we will have the opportunity to witness the fire dance amidst drumming from the local villages in Kara. *B/D*



Day 12, Friday 17th November
KARA — KABY MOUNTAINS —
NATITINGOU

After breakfast, we check out of the hotel and head to Natitingou (informally known as Nati) in Benin. Enroute, we'll visit the Tchare village nestled in the valley of the Mount Kabye, a popular blacksmithing community. Blacksmiths cast and work the iron over an open flame, manufacturing farming tools using this method over many years. We will also visit the traditional homes of the Soukalas to discover the Nano caves, the history and daily lives of this indigenous people. We will enjoy the opportunity to interacting with the locals. You may also observe monkeys on the hills. Then cross borders at Boukoumbe border between Togo and Benin to Natitingou.

Welcome to Benin

Visit Tata Somba, the home of the Tamberma people straddling the border of Togo and Benin. Visit a

traditional village where each mud-house is built as a fortress. You will have time to visit several of these



magical and enchanting structures and meet the Tamberma people, some of whom still wear headgear made from the horns of gazelles. Their miniature fortified castles are UNESCO World Heritage cultural landscape site known as the Koutammakou. You will also see potters who use prehistoric methods and have no ovens but produce ceramic goods covered with straw which are baked. Check into Hotel Totoria (or similar) for one night. *B/D*

Day 13, Saturday 18th November
NATITINGOU — ABOMEY

Today is a long transfer with a full day of driving, heading south through Benin (approx. 421 km). Check into the Suncity Hotel, Abomey (or similar) at the end of the afternoon. We will stay here for two nights. *B/D*



Day 14, Sunday 19th November
ABOMEY

Our journey today continues to Abomey, the ancient capital of the Dahomey Kingdom. This area used to be known as "Slave Coast" in the history, which was

in parallel with “Ivory Coast” and the “Gold Coast”. Upon arrival, visit the Royal Palaces of Abomey, a history museum of Abomey, which has been listed as UNESCOs World Heritage since 1985. Then proceed to Allada, is the birthplace of Toussaint Louverture’s parents. Toussaint Louverture is the leader of Haitian Revolution and also the greatest man in Haiti’s history. In Allada, a sculpture was built in memory of Toussaint. Return to the hotel for the evening at leisure. Dinner at the hotel. *B/D*

Day 15, Monday 20th November
ABOMEY — GANVIE — COTONOU

After breakfast, we’ll further explore the Abomey-Calavi fetish market, the most authentic in the region and (hopefully)



meet one of the officiating fetish priests. We will also visit Ganvie, “the African Venice” which is one of the highlights of any trip to West Africa.

In ancient times

people took refuge on Lake Nokoue from the attacks of the feared Dahomey warriors who were forbidden by a deep belief to fight on water. The Ganvie people over time developed this unique lake culture and way of life which have made them famous. Our boat cruise takes us along tranquil waterways and fish farms to the lake community of Ganvie. We discover these curious built-on-stilts dwellings, small floating markets and different aspects of local daily life. We’ll continue to Cotonou where we stay for 2 nights (approx. 130 km). Our accommodation for two nights is at the Golden Tulip Diplomate (or similar). *B/D*

Day 16, Tuesday 21st November
COTONOU — OUIDAH — COTONOU

Aside the Annual Voodoo Festival, there are a number of attractions at Ouidah which are both fascinating and unsettling. First we will visit the Portuguese Fort now housing the History Museum. The exhibit focuses on the slave trade and Benin consequent cultural links



with the Caribbean and the Americas.

Then on to the Voodoo Museum; the Kpasse Sacred Forest complete with statues of gods and sacrifices; the Cathedral and

Temple of the Sacred Pythons where you will see the 41 writhing pythons (41 is voodoo magic number), worshipped and kept sacred by the locals. From the city centre, we retrace part of the infamous slave route, passing through a former slave market and numerous shrines and memories erected by the African Diaspora of the New World. We will travel all

the way to the ocean and the Door of No Return which marks the spot where slaves left Africa for the New World. We return to Cotonou after lunch with some free time in the afternoon. Dinner at the hotel. *B/D*

Day 17, Wednesday 22nd November
COTONOU — DAKAR — SALLY

After breakfast, we will be transferred from our hotel to the airport for the flight to Dakar (flights to be confirmed).

Welcome to Senegal!

Upon arrival, drive to Saly and check into Hotel Royam (or similar). *B/D*

Day 18, Thursday 23rd November
SALY — JOAL FADIOUTH — BANJUL

After breakfast, visit the oldest (1500 years old) and baobab tree in West Africa. We then continue to the twin villages of Joal/Fadiouth,

where we will visit the traditional Serere village and observe the cathedral, the market place, and the famous multi-religious cemetery.



Joal-Fadiouth is a sleepy twin village with Joal on the mainland and Fadiouth, linked by a narrow 400-metre wooden bridge lies on an island built entirely of seashells. We will visit the shell islands of Fadiouth, symbol of tolerance: where Muslims Christians and animists are living together and buried side by side in an unusual mixed cemetery.

Welcome to The Gambia

We will then drive to Banjul for our two nights at Princess Hotel (or similar). Dinner at the hotel. *B/D*

Day 19, Friday 24th November
BANJUL

Today, we will take a wonderful cruise on the Gambia River. You’ll watch the locals going about their day and you’ll see how important the river is to their livelihood. Drive back to Banjul in the afternoon and continue with the Banjul city tour including the museum, markets, Serrekunda and Tanje. Dinner and overnight at the hotel. *B/D*

Day 20, Saturday 25th
November
BANJUL — STONE
CIRCLE —
KAOLACK

We have an early rise this morning to drive



to Sine Ngayene to see the magnificent Stones Circles. Visit "The Sine Ngayene complex, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It consists of 52 circles of standing stones, including one double circle. In all, there are 1102 carved stones on the site. Nearby is the quarry from which the monoliths were extracted and where the source of around 150 stones can be traced.

Back to Senegal

We continue to Kaolack for overnight at Relais Kaolack (or similar). **B/L/D**

Day 21, Sunday 26th November KAOLACK — TOUBA — ST. LOUIS

After breakfast, we'll drive to Touba the holy city. Visit the Grand Mosque which is the largest and most magnificent in all West Africa. We will learn about Cheikh Ahmadou Mbacke the founder of Mouridism and the history of Touba one of the most significant cities in West Africa. Touba



is an autonomous city much like the Vatican in Italy. After Touba continue to St. Louis. Enroute we'll continue to St. Louis with a stop in Fulani and Wolof villages. Arrive in St Louis and check in to the Hotel Mermoz (or similar) where we stay for two nights. **B/D**

Day 22, Monday 27th November ST. LOUIS – DJOUDJ – ST LOUIS

After breakfast, we'll visit the Djoudj National Park (a UNESCO World Heritage site), which is one of the most important bird sanctuaries in the world. Situated on a major palearctic migratory route, this park is a paradise for bird enthusiasts. Some of the world's greatest concentrations of white pelicans and flamingos can be seen here: up to 10,000 species. Enjoy a pirogue ride to better view the many species of cormorants, pelicans, ducks, flamingos, various songbirds and more. You may also see crocodiles, boats and other wildlife. Complete your city tour of Saint Louis. **B/L/D**

Day 23, Tuesday 28th November ST. LOUIS — PINK LAKE — DAKAR



After breakfast depart to Dakar, the capital of Senegal. En-route, we'll take a tour of the Pink Lake, a rare natural phenomenon caused by a unique combination of microorganism and high concentration of salts which

gives the lake its pink hue. We'll meet the women working at harvesting the salt. Next we will visit the Fulani village where you may be welcomed by the chief and his wives. Continue to Dakar to Hotel Ndiambour (or similar) where we stay for two nights.

B/D

Day 24, Wednesday 29th November DAKAR — GOREE — DAKAR

After breakfast, begin our city tour of Dakar and surrounds. From independence place, the heart of the city, we will pass by the presidential palace and the main cathedral before continuing by the seafront drive towards Soumbédioune market, and the mosque de la revelation. The tour of Dakar will show you the contrasts between upscale residential areas and other popular neighbourhoods. We will also visit popular hotspots such Kermel or Tilem market. Next, we'll visit the Renaissance Monument, a 164-foot-high monument, overlooking Dakar that is taller than the Statue of Liberty. The once controversial bronze statue is a popular attraction among locals as well as visitors. Then to Africa's most modern museum, the Museum of African Civilisation, a massive four story complex which fulfilled the dreams of Senegal's first president Leopold Sedar Senghor. In the afternoon, we will board the ferry for a 20 minutes ride to visit the



charming yet infamous Goree Island, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Explore the usually quiet streets lined with pastel coloured colonial era buildings. Among the most famous buildings is the House of Slaves which records the history of Goree's past. **B/D**

Day 25, Thursday 30th November DAKAR

Today is free time until your flight departure (TBA). **B**

Day 26, Friday 1st December

In transit.

Day 27, Saturday 2nd December

Arrive home.



Icon indicates a day where there is **moderate physical exertion**. A basic level of fitness is required: eg. A trek over 'mostly flat' terrain or climbing several flights of steps without the support of handrails or elevators.



Icon indicates a day where there is a **particularly active section**. A good level of fitness is required: eg. A longer trek over non-groomed, uneven terrain, or ascending to reach a panorama. May also include exposure to higher altitude. **An alternate activity may be offered if you choose to sit out an active section.** Please call - we are happy to discuss each tour in more detail.